



Park School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110581
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278457
Inspection dates 18 October 2005 to 19 October 2005
Reporting inspector Melvyn Blackband AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Stocklake
School category	Community special		Aylesbury
Age range of pupils	4 to 19		Buckinghamshire HP20 1DP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01296423507
Number on roll	62	Fax number	01296433353
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr R Butcher
Date of previous inspection	27 September 1999	Headteacher	Mr R Westwood

Age group 4 to 19	Inspection dates 18 October 2005 - 19 October 2005	Inspection number 278457
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

Park school is a day, co-educational special school in Aylesbury for pupils aged 4-19 with severe and profound and multiple learning disabilities. There are currently 62 pupils. The provision for the majority of post-16 students is based separately at Harding House, a large modified residence in the town centre. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is below the national average. There are firm plans to reorganise the school from 2007 to provide only for secondary aged pupils.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school says that it provides a good education for all pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage, and inspection evidence confirms this view. The provision for post-16 students is outstanding. Because of their learning difficulties, the standards reached by pupils are well below national averages but all pupils make good progress and achieve well, particularly in their personal development. Pupils love coming to school and parents are very happy for their children to attend, knowing they will be safe, well cared for and free from anxiety. Teaching is good. Teachers are committed, know the children well and relationships are very good. Leadership and management are good and there has been rapid improvement under the recently formed senior management team. The headteacher has a clear vision for improvement and he is very well supported by a competent senior team. Major, positive changes have been made recently to the structure of the curriculum and the ways teachers assess the pupils' progress. This is starting to prove effective in giving a clearer structure to teachers' planning and pupils' learning, although more remains to be done. The school has correctly identified the need for improvement in planning to establish secure links with assessment. The school has a good capacity to improve. Well established checks give the management a clear picture of the school's performance and inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of its own performance. The school's finances are very well managed and daily routines are efficient. The school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Students in post-16 receive a high quality education, especially in vocational work. As a result they have a good understanding of adult responsibilities and how they can make a positive contribution to society. Effective teaching enables students to reach their potential in a range of suitable nationally accredited courses. Students respond well to challenging targets and their successes are celebrated appropriately in well presented records of achievement. Provision for learning about working life is excellent. There are very good relations with outside agencies such as Connexions. The students have well supported opportunities to experience places of work with as much independence as possible. Students are given every opportunity to join with the community through a very well planned programme of education in citizenship. They work for charities and last year raised over 1500 pounds through sponsored walks, coffee mornings and carol singing. The leadership and management of the provision are very good.

What the school should do to improve further

* Clearly identify the learning priorities for pupils at each stage of their education and ensure that timetables for activities reflect this appropriately. * Ensure that learning objectives in the new curriculum are securely linked to assessment procedures

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils make good progress, particularly in the basic skills of communication and mathematical development. Over time they learn to listen appropriately and to reply to questions. By the time pupils reach post-16, most are confident speakers and in many cases able to read and write simple sentences. Pupils in the Foundation Stage do very well. They are quickly helped to adapt to a school setting and parents are pleased with their progress towards self-help and communication. Pupils' personal development is very good. As they progress through the school, they make substantial gains in their independence skills and in their knowledge of appropriate behaviour. Older pupils contribute to discussion about their learning programmes and targets and they have a good understanding of how they have progressed. Records show that pupils continue to make progress in each stage of their education culminating in the success of the students in the post-16 unit. Pupils achieve well in relation to the targets in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very well behaved. This reflects the school's strong management of behaviour and the emphasis on moral and social values. Staff provide very good role models for pupils and this results in an ethos of mutual support and tolerance. There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual development, for instance in the sensitive management of bereavement when the school tragically loses pupils. Staff and pupils value each other and many examples were seen during the inspection of pupils' consideration for others. Pupils enter the school each morning with big smiles and say 'hello' to everyone. Attendance has greatly improved and is now good. The school is active in following up any unexplained absences by pupils. There is a calm atmosphere in the school, largely because pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers provide exceptionally good opportunities for pupils to go into the local community, such as the library and local shops. Older pupils and students get good support in learning how to make a positive contribution to society and their economic understanding is enriched through the well organised programme of work related learning. The teachers' emphasis on working in teams enhances social development. Pupils feel safe and there is no bullying or intimidation. The school has good programmes for sex and relationships and is aware of the need to promote a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of healthy eating through the programme for personal, health and social education. The pupils are helped to choose healthy school meals and snacks. Parents are pleased with their children's development towards independent living. One wrote that his daughter more and more was saying, 'I'll do it myself'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The teaching is uniformly good across the school. There are very good relationships with pupils which adds to pupils' enjoyment and motivation. The staff form exceptionally good classroom teams, working well together and sharing responsibility. The teams ensure that each pupil is well supported and remains interested in the lessons. The new curriculum and assessment procedures have strengthened the teachers' planning. Lessons proceed at a good pace and teachers use their knowledge of pupils to pay close attention to individual pupils' needs. In an effective lesson with pupils with profound and multiple disabilities, the staff kept very good records of pupils' involvement; they were very aware of any slight attempts at communication and worked very hard to maintain the pupils' interest and enjoyment. The quality of assessment of pupils' work has shown recent improvement and has become more clearly focused on their achievement. This has had a positive impact on their progress. The staff do not make uniformly good use of signing and other methods of alternative communication and this inhibits the understanding of some pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 1

Recent development has ensured that there is an appropriate curriculum in place. Teaching staff have been effectively trained in its application and they are now able to add more rigour and structure to their lesson planning. The pupils enjoy well constructed and interesting activities and in the best lessons teachers have been able to adapt the curriculum to take account of each pupil's learning targets. This is not yet common throughout the school. For instance, there is as yet no uniform agreement on the amount of time to give each subject. Each teacher plans a timetable for her class and these show some variation in the emphasis, for instance, on teaching basic skills. There is a good range of activities which enrich the curriculum. There are many visitors to school and pupils take a full part with pupils from mainstream schools in the music club and a joint arts production. Staff make use of a wide range of activities beyond the school to teach the pupils that new things can be learned in all sorts of situations. The curriculum for post-16 students is very good in its range of vocational courses and the very well planned leisure activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is safe. Health and safety requirements are very well monitored and there are very good procedures for child protection. The school works extremely well with

a variety of outside agencies. There are exemplary links with the Children with Disabilities team and this multi-agency working has a significant impact on the pupils' safety and well being and has a positive effect on helping pupils to become part of the community. There are very sound procedures for medical care and relevant staff are appropriately trained for emergency interventions with specific children. Pupils receive very good support in overcoming their difficulties in school. They are able to explore their own boundaries and become as independent as their capabilities allow. Careers advice is excellent. There are very good working relationships with outside agencies. Students in post-16 provision are very well prepared for the transition to adult life and their continuing learning at colleges of further education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that leadership and management are good. The headteacher has been effective in introducing necessary improvements to the school and he has established a high level of staff morale. All staff feel valued and treated as professionals. He has the confidence of governors, staff and the local authority. He knows what needs to be done to improve the school and he has been well supported by the senior management team. The headteacher has duties outside Park School and he is aware that currently there is insufficient support for the deputy headteacher who manages the school on a day by day basis. Her hard work and commitment ensure that the school operates efficiently but she does not have the time to fully monitor all aspects of provision. Communication within the school is good and all staff feel fully consulted. The quality of professional training for all staff is very good and closely linked to the needs of pupils. Governors play an important role in development. They are fully informed on all aspects of the school's performance and are thus able to offer challenge to the headteacher and to give strong support to developments. Parents feel very happy with the school's provision and feel very well informed about their children's progress. The school is in a good position to maintain improvement. Planning and assessment procedures have improved and are secure. There are appropriate plans for short and long term improvement when the school changes its provision. Senior staff are active in improving on the school's performance. They are aware however, that they need to have clearer procedures to help them evaluate how well they are doing.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Not long ago I came to your school to have a look at how well you were doing and to see if there was anything I could suggest to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed your company. Thank you and well done!!

I was with you for two days. That was long enough for me to realise that Park School is a good school. One of the reasons is because you are so well behaved and keen to learn. I really enjoyed watching your lessons. There are a lot of things I liked. Here are a few.* I can see that you enjoy your lessons and do very well* There are many people working in the school who are doing their best to look after you* You are able to do as much as possible for yourselves. This will help you to be independent when you grow up.* In the post-16 part of the school you are learning a lot about life and work. This will help you when you leave school.

One of the things I felt could make the school better is for your teachers to write down more clearly how you have improved and what you should learn next. Then you could do even better!